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TAGS: [OTRA](#) [AMGT](#) [GR](#)  
SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR GREECE FOR EUR/SE DESK  
OFFICER ELISE MELLINGER

¶1. Embassy warmly welcomes and grants country clearance for the visit of Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey Desk Officer Elise Mellinger to travel to Greece February 9-13, 2007 for consultations and meetings with government officials and NGO representatives. Embassy point of contact is Political Officer Patrick Connell, who can be reached during office hours at 30-210-720-2551, on cellular at 30-694-405-7009, and via email to [connellpd@state.gov](mailto:connellpd@state.gov). The Embassy's after hours duty receptionist can be reached at 30-210-729-4444.

¶2. Hotel accommodations have been secured. Details regarding the hotels and schedules have been communicated via email from the control officer, Patrick Connell.

¶3. It is important that all visitors carefully read the information and instructions provided below. Post wants to ensure the best possible service to all official visitors and will work closely to arrange details of each visit.

¶4. Early morning check-in: For those coming from Washington, D.C., often on the early morning Delta flight arriving at 1005, please note there is no guarantee of early check-in at the hotel. Normal check-in time is 1400. Although post can request early check-in for travelers, the only way to guarantee a room waiting is to reserve it for the preceding night. Travelers who wish to book the previous night must request post to make this reservation. The traveler is responsible for this expense.

¶5. Arrivals: Transportation has been arranged for arrival at the airport. Depending on traffic, the trip to the Embassy takes 40 to 60 minutes.

¶6. Documents required: Diplomatic and official passport holders must have Greek diplomatic visas, a valid Schengen visa or diplomatic ID from any other Schengen country, in addition to their passport, in order to enter Greece. The Embassy will be unable to obtain plane-side visas for USG employees arriving in Greece without proper documentation. Holders of tourist passports do not/not require visas. USG employees who plan to operate a motor vehicle while in Greece must be in possession of a valid U.S. drivers, license as well as a valid International Drivers, License and must carry proof of third party liability insurance while operating the vehicle.

¶7. Embassy access: Embassy Athens has installed a new identification badging system, which requires that all Department of State employees bring their Global ID and/or Smart Card that will be acknowledged as proper Embassy ID. DOS employees will be expected to stop by the RSO Office to program their ID to be compatible with the Athens system.

¶8. Regional Medical Office: The Health Unit at the Embassy is fully staffed. A StateDepartment medical clearance is

required by all employees of agencies participating in ICASS who will be traveling TDY for more than 60 days a year. Health Unit access is not guaranteed without this clearance. Family members will not have access to the Health Unit unless they are on employees, travel orders. We strongly recommend that TDYers bring with them proof of current medical insurance coverage and medevac coverage if obtained.

¶9. Each visitor requiring support from the embassy, regardless of length of stay, must bring/forward fiscal data to pay for direct costs of the visit. Each military TDYer requesting embassy support should be able to provide the sponsoring military entity at post fiscal data, even if staying at post less than thirty days. Each agency, organization or visiting delegation will be charged for the actual costs attributed to its visit. Direct charge costs include, but are not limited to: American and LES overtime (for such services as airport expediting, cashier accommodation exchange, control room staffing, representational event support), travel and per diem costs incurred by post personnel in support of visitor's field travel, rental of vehicles and other equipment, long distance telephone calls, office supplies, gasoline and other vehicle maintenance costs, departure tax and other airport fees. Post will not provide service if fiscal data is not provided for the direct charges. For TDYers remaining at post over 30 days, there is a charge for ICASS support services. This charge is for the following ICASS services: Basic Package, CLO and Health Services. The charge per month is approximately \$125. Agencies will not be billed until the accumulated invoice cost for TDY support exceeds \$2,500 for the fiscal year. If your sponsoring agency is not signed up for ICASS services at post, please be prepared to sign a Memorandum of Understanding for ICASS support services upon arrival. Each agency should provide post with a written communication, generated by the traveler's headquarters, that

confirms the agency will pay ICASS charges for the TDYer, provides the agency ICASS billing code the TDY support charges should be applied to, and authorizes the traveler to sign the ICASS invoice generated by the TDY module. Where travel is urgent, the TDYer should bring this documentation with him/her to ensure there are no interruptions in the provision of service. Post will not provide any service to a TDYer staying in excess of thirty days without provision of this documentation before day 31 of the TDY.

¶10. Currency: Greece is a member of the European Monetary Union, and the Euro is the currency of the country. Accommodation exchange is available on a limited basis (responsible agency/section signed authorization) at the Embassy cashier office ) hours are M-F 0930 ) 1030, 1200 - 1300 and 1430 ) 1530. However, ATMs are readily available throughout the country (there is also one at the Embassy); they will accept U.S. debit cards. In addition, most banks and major hotels provide accommodation exchange services. Post is unable to provide reverse accommodation.

¶11. Office space/laptops/mobile phones: Office space in both classified and unclassified areas is extremely limited. For those employees planning on bringing laptops and modems to use in their hotels, please remember that this equipment can be used for processing unclassified (non-SBU) information only. Current here is 220 volt, 50 cycles, and outlets are two-pronged. Bring along a plug adapter and equipment that can handle the voltage. Laptops are not permitted in controlled access areas of the Embassy. European GSM mobile phones function normally in Greece.

¶12. Security information:

¶A. Embassy Athens is designated &high8 for indigenous terrorism. In the past, local Greek terrorist groups have targeted prominent Greeks as well as certain non-Greek Officials, including Americans. We believe that the threat to official US Government personnel on short-term assignments to Greece or visiting for tourism is relatively low. The

indigenous groups historically have engaged in extensive operational surveillance over long periods of time. In 2003 and again in 2004, the Greek Government made significant progress to combat domestic terrorism by successfully convicting the leader and key hit men of the November 17 terrorist organization and of the ELA. 17N was responsible for assassinating prominent Greeks and five members of the US Mission over the course of its 30-year history. Convicted ELA members were responsible for several bombings, attempted murders and were involved in at least one assassination. While these convictions likely impacted on the operational capabilities of 17N and ELA, it is too soon to assess whether the threat from domestic terrorism is completely eliminated. We urge vigilance and caution, as the worldwide threat from other terrorist groups against Americans in general remains high. Official Americans should assume they are potential targets.

1B. Over the past year the U.S. Embassy has experienced numerous bomb threats, protest marches, and anti-U.S. demonstrations. These protests are generally peaceful though a few provoked random acts of violence. Travelers to Greece are advised that protests or demonstrations could occur at any time; unwitting observers or bystanders might be identified, to their disadvantage, as Americans. RSO recommends that official U.S. travelers in Greece remain alert when moving about in public places and avoid certain places where demonstrators frequently congregate. These places include the Polytechnical University area, located on 28 October (Patission) Street between the National Archeological Museum and Omonia Square; Exarchion Square, located near Kolonaki; Omonia and Syntagma Squares, which are often used as launch sites for large demonstrations; and Mavili Square, located near the U.S. Embassy. Visitors should keep abreast of news about large demonstrations and avoid these areas and metro stops.

1C. Crime is rated medium in Greece. For TDY visitors, pick-pocketing and purse snatching are the most common crimes. Taxis are generally safe though metered cabs are recommended. Taxis too will often pick up more than one passenger unless prior arrangements are made. Crimes of opportunity (thefts, break-ins, and occasional scams) are on the rise. Travelers should be especially cautious with wallets, purses, and parcels when traveling on crowded streets, public buses, trolleys, and/or subways. There have been several instances of motorcyclists approaching cars stuck in traffic, reaching through open windows or smashing closed ones, and stealing whatever is within reach. We have also recently learned of a new scenario in which

motorcyclists open the trunk of a vehicle and remove the contents. The Embassy recommends keeping purses, parcels, handbags, etc. out of sight under the seat or on the floor of the car. Windows should be kept closed and doors locked. Pedestrians may also be confronted by beggars and other street people who may attempt to divert attention, then steal unprotected valuables either by pick-pocketing or snatch-and-grab techniques. Women are generally safe from violent crime in Greece. Men are aggressive by American standards however when pursuing women.

1D. Traffic in Greek urban areas, especially Athens and Thessaloniki, is undisciplined. Greece has a poor record within the European Union for traffic fatalities, mainly due to excessive speeding. Road rage is always a risk. Accidents can result in fistfights. Drivers in Greece should exercise caution and common sense. Drivers and pedestrians alike should exercise extreme caution when operating motor vehicles or when walking along roadways. Moreover, tourists who rent motorbikes either on the Greek mainland or its islands must wear helmets and must take special precautions on the local roads that are typically poorly maintained and frequently pothole-ridden. Greece also has a poor record within the European Union in motorcycle deaths.

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